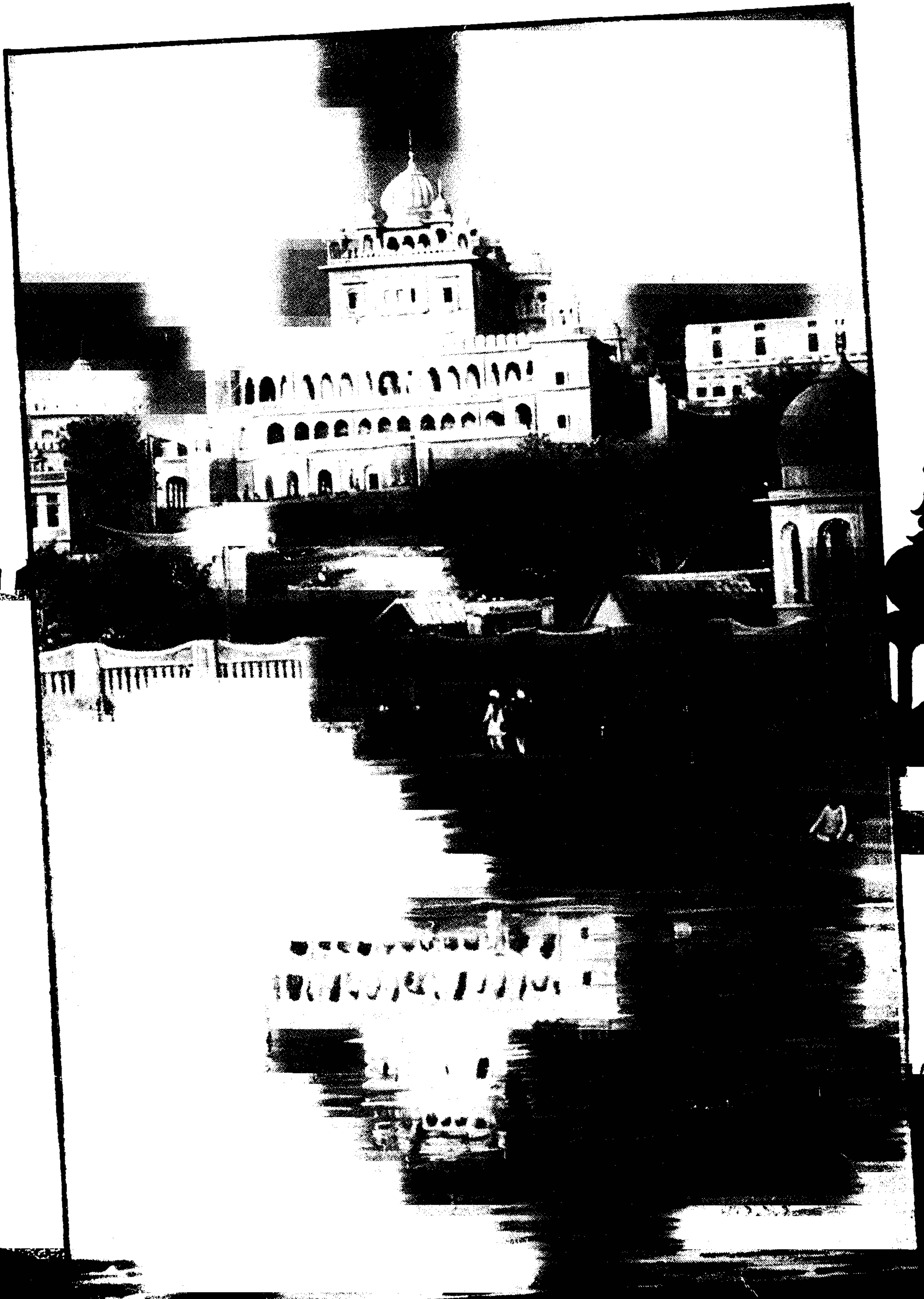


A. S. Shan

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City of JOY

SRI ANANDPUR SAHIB



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Anandpur Sahib, the holy City of Joy, is one of Sikhs' four most important sacred places and is closely linked with their religious tradition and history. It lies on the lower spurs of the Himalayas, surrounded by picturesque natural scenery,



Takhat Sri Keshgarh Sahib, one of the Four Takhats or Sikh Seats of Religious Authority.

with the river Sutlej forming a shiny, blue border on the South-West, barely four miles away. The famous Nangal Dam is 13 miles to the North. The Bhakra and Nangal Projects have opened up the country and made communication easier, bringing Anandpur Sahib on the Rupar-Nangal route by road as well as by rail.

In historical significance, Anandpur Sahib is second only to Amritsar, the city of Golden Temple. It was founded in 1664 by the ninth Sikh Guru or prophet, Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib, near the ruins of an ancient place—Makhowal. The site was purchased by him from the ruler of Bilaspur, a small hill chieftainship. The town achieved its greatest glory in the time of Sri Guru Gobind Singh (1666—1708), the last of Sikhs' Ten Gurus, who spent nearly 25 years of his life here. In the solitude of the place the Guru performed his meditations and contemplated plans for the liberation of the country from the tyranny of the Mughal rulers. Its strategic position fell in with his plans and programme of training the Sikhs in the art of war and thus creating an order of warrior-saints, pledged to upholding truth and religion and to regaining the freedom of the land.

128



Bunga Baba Jiwan Singh, who performed the feat of bringing the head of Guru Teg Bahadur from Delhi, at a great personal risk.

The founder, Sri Guru Teg Bahadur, stayed in Anandpur only for a short period and left on a long tour of the country which took him as far as Assam in the East. During this period Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna, in Bihar. He was 8 years old when he

was brought to Anandpur Sahib. Here he resumed his studies in Sanskrit and Arabic and engaged in the practice of arms.

At Anandpur, Guru Teg Bahadur was visited in 1675 by a deputation of Kashmiri Brahmans, who requested him to save them and their faith from the religious fanaticism of the mighty Mughal, Aurangzeb. Guru Teg Bahadur knew that this object could not be achieved without revolutionizing the spirit and psychology of the Indian people and declared that as an initial measure one noble person should be willing to immolate himself to the cause of freedom. "Where is a nobler person than yourself?" Said his young son Gobind Singh, then about 9 years old. Pleased at these brave words, Guru Teg Bahadur left Anandpur Sahib for Delhi, the Mughal capital, to lay down his life for the sake of his sacred mission.

Aurangzeb offered Guru Teg Bahadur the usual choice of Islam or the sword. The Guru accepted the latter and was beheaded in Delhi on Nov. 11, 1675. The revolution conceived in Anandpur had begun. On the site of the Guru's martyrdom now stands Gurdwara Sis Ganj which

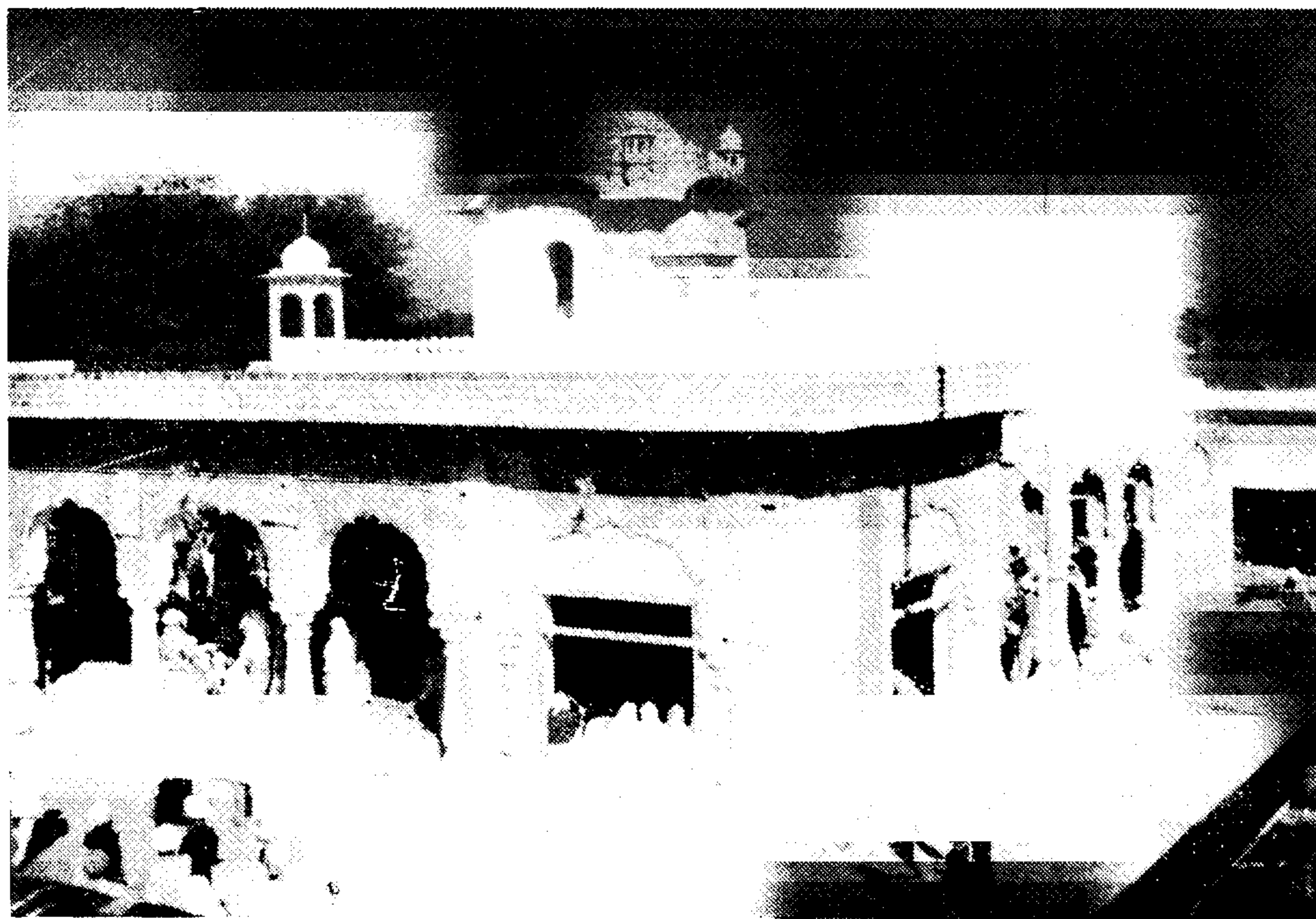
is one of Sikhs' most sacred shrines in the Indian metropolis.

In defiance of the Mughal authority, the severed head of the Guru was brought to Anandpur by a brave Sikh, Jaita, named Jiwan Singh after baptism, at a great personal risk and sacrifice.

Guru Gobind Singh was deeply touched by this act of unique courage and devotion and blessed Bhai Jaita and all other people of his class as "his own sons". On the spot where the cremation took place, the Guru built a Gurdwara known as Sis Ganj.

For some years Guru Gobind Singh retired to a place on the banks of river Jumna where he built a fort called Paonta. This period he spent in meditation and study. The process of organizing the Sikhs into an order of warrior-saints devoted to religion as also to the task of defending it against aggression and intolerance, continued. The neighbouring hill chiefs, who were Hindus by religion and paid tribute to the Mughal emperor in Delhi, became jealous of the growing power of the Sikhs and the splendour of the Guru's court.

They also did not take kindly to the Sikh faith and disapproved, in particular, of the way the four castes mixed in it. The Sikh *Langar* or community kitchen, where all ate together irrespective of considerations



*Gurdwara Sis Ganj, Anandpur Sahib.
Here was cremated the head of
Guru Teg Bahadur.*

of caste and position, was a challenge to the time-honoured social traditions of the Hindus.

The hill chiefs' hostility towards the Sikhs became so great that they attacked them with the combined forces under the command of Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur. A pitched battle took place at Bhangani, six miles from Paonta, in which the armies of the chiefs were defeated. This was in the beginning of 1686. Guru Gobind Singh was pleased at this valorous feat of the Sikhs, and, on his return to Anandpur, founded a fort to commemorate the victory. The fort was named Anandgarh. To further fortify Anandpur, the Guru built three more forts—Lohgarh, Keshgarh and Fatehgarh.

At Anandpur, Guru Gobind Singh also instituted a drum, known as Ranjit Nagara. This was beaten morning and evening at the time of the Sikh prayer in contravention of Emperor Aurangzeb's orders forbidding any such announcements in non-Muslim places of worship. The Ranjit Nagara proclaimed from those hilltops Sikhs' resolve to resist political and religious tyranny and their will to freedom.

On March 30, 1699, Anandpur witnessed a scene full of drama and



The Anand Garh Fort—the first and the main fort built by the Guru in 1686 A.D.

deep symbolic and mystical significance. This was the day of Baisakhi and the Guru had invited Sikhs from all parts of the country. After his morning ablutions and prayers, he appeared before the congregation, a naked s w o r d

in his hand. Addressing himself to the assembly, he said, "I want to-day a head. Let any one of my true Sikhs come forward. My sword wants a head."



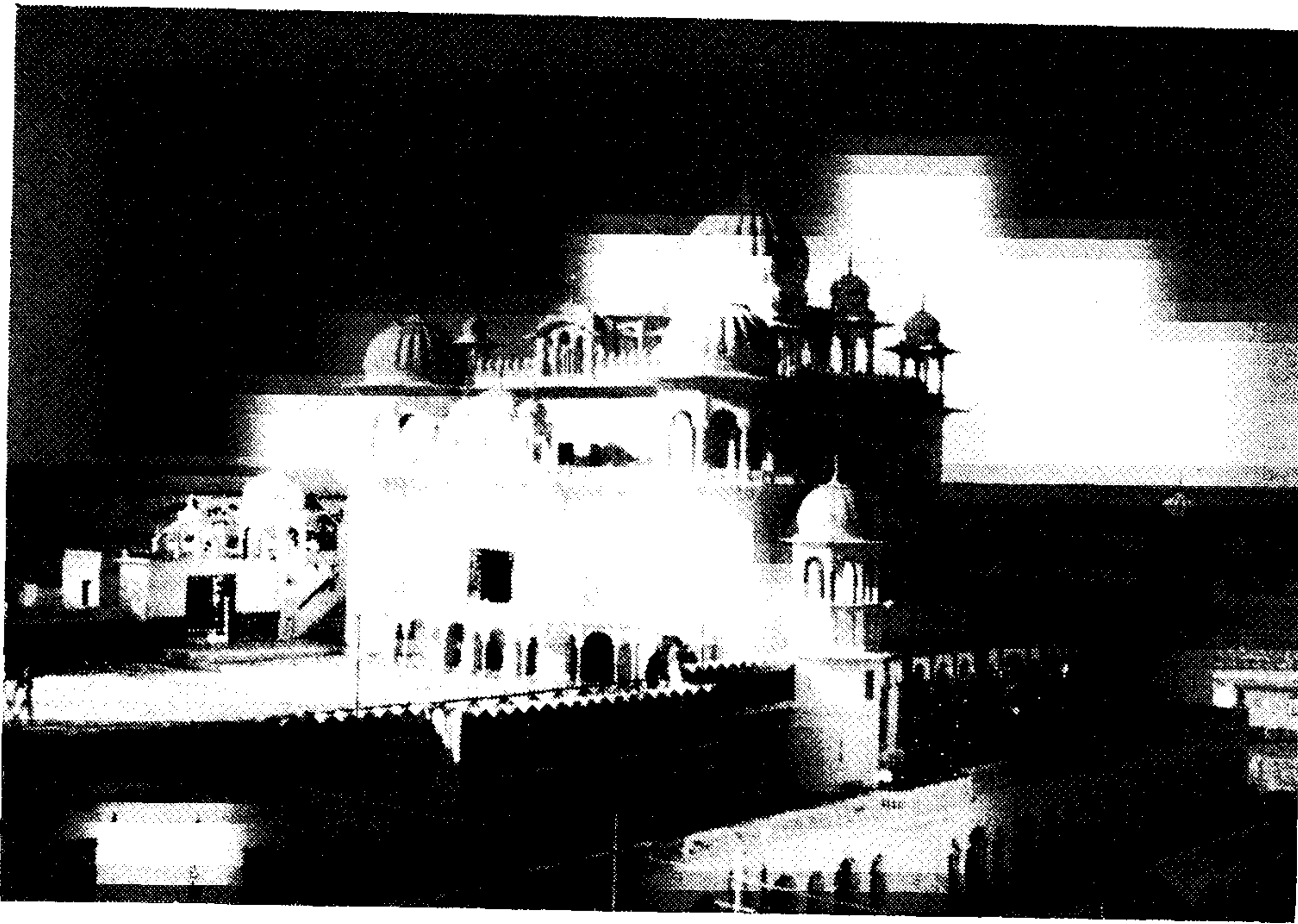
A benumbing silence fell upon the audience. They gazed in awed

*Holgarh Sahib.
Another of the Anandpur fortresses.*

wonder until the Guru spoke again. Now confusion turned to fear. For the third time the Guru reiterated his demand. Daya Ram, of Lahore, arose and said, "My head is at thy service, my True Lord !" The Guru took him to a tent nearby and returned with his sword dripping blood. He demanded another head. Dharam Dass, of Delhi, stood up and said with folded hands : "Take my head, Oh great Lord !" Guru Gobind Singh made three more calls. Mohkam Chand, of Dwarka, Himmat, of Jagannath, and Sahib Chand, of Bedar, advanced and offered themselves.

These five Beloved Ones, as they were known and blessed by the Guru, were dressed in handsome clothes and escorted back to the meeting. The four so-called Shudras and a Khatri formed the nucleus of the new self-abnegating, martial and casteless fellowship of the Khalsa.

Guru Gobind Singh then held the ceremony of baptism. Filling an iron vessel with pure water, he stirred it with a two-edged sword, and recited over it the sacred verses. The Guru's wife, Mata Jito ji, put in some sweets. Amrit, or the nectar of immortality, was now ready and the five Sikhs



Gurdwara Keshgarh Sahib. One of the four Takhts, or Sikh Seats of Religious Authority, where five Sikhs volunteered their heads at Guru Gobind Singh's bidding, creating the nucleus of the self-abnegating, brave and casteless fellowship of the Khalsa.

each took five palmfuls of it. They were given the appellation of Singh, or lion. They were ever to wear *Keshas*, long hair, *Kangha*, a comb, *Kara*, a steel bacelet, *Kachha*, short drawers, and *Kirpan*, a sword. They were enjoined to help the poor and fight

the oppressor, to have faith in one God and to abandon superstition, dogma and caste. They were to be the saint-soldiers, worshipping God as well as steel.

The Guru then himself took baptism from the five Sikhs and thus established the principle of perfect equality among the Khalsa. About 20,000 people were baptized that day. The Sikhs returned to their homes kindled with the new spirit and enthusiasm. The inspiration which had guided the Sikhs for several generations thus took a concrete shape at Anandpur.

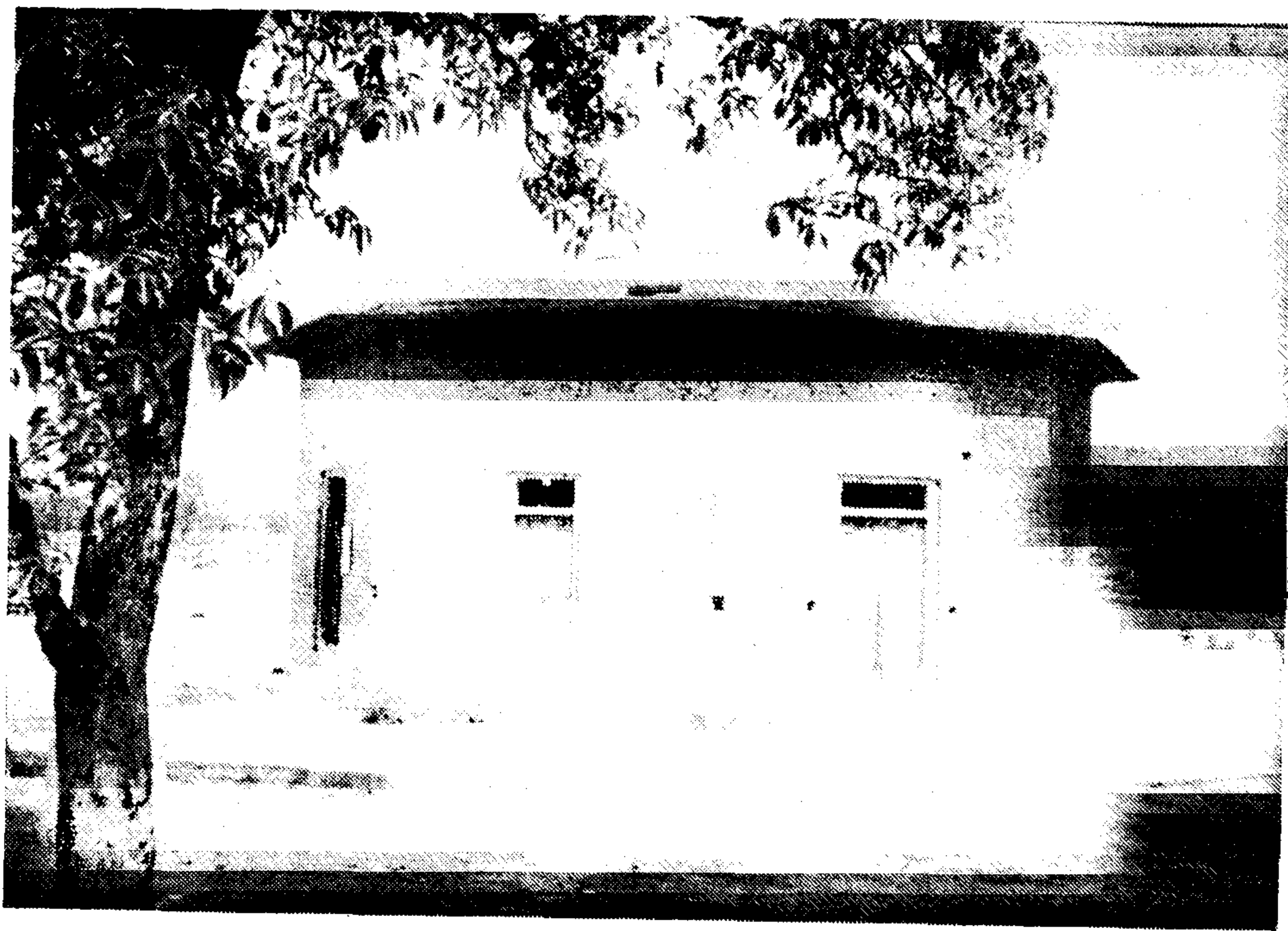
The festival of Holi acquired a new significance in Anandpur and it came to be celebrated in a novel manner. Instead of an occasion for colour-splashing, it became a day of manly exercises, tournaments, military parades and mimic battles. Guru Gobind Singh gave it the name of Holi Mohalla and it was held a day after the Hindu festival of Holi.

From 1701 to 1704, Anandpur was in a state of constant siege. The armies of the Mughal viceroys of Sirhind and Lahore and of the Hindu hill chieftains combined to attack the town

which was cut off from all communication with the outside world. The Sikhs faced a most unequal contest in which they were vastly outnumbered. Yet they fought with unflinching tenacity and heroism and showed an infinite capacity for suffering physical hardship. At last, upon the besiegers' solemn word that they would not molest the Sikhs if they evacuated the town, Guru Gobind Singh was persuaded to leave. But the enemy broke their promise and Anandpur was sacked and the country around laid waste. The houses and fortresses of the Guru were demolished.

The Guru was pursued and, in the actions that took place, two of his sons and many other Sikhs lost their lives. In this period of stress, Guru Gobind Singh did not forget Anandpur and sent there an Udasi saint, Baba Gurbakhsh Rai, to look after Guru Teg Bahadur's shrine, Gurdwara Sis Ganj.

After Guru Gobind Singh's passing on in 1708, Sikhs' struggle became extremely difficult and bitter. They were out-lawed and persecuted. No civic life was possible for them and their Gurdwaras and shrines fell into neglect. The more important ones were either occupied or demolished. For a while, when Sikhs under Banda Singh (1670—1716), who had received his baptism at the hands of Guru Gobind Singh, overran parts of the Panjab, they had an opportunity of re-establishing



*Gurdwara Lohgarh.
An other Fortress built by the Guru.*

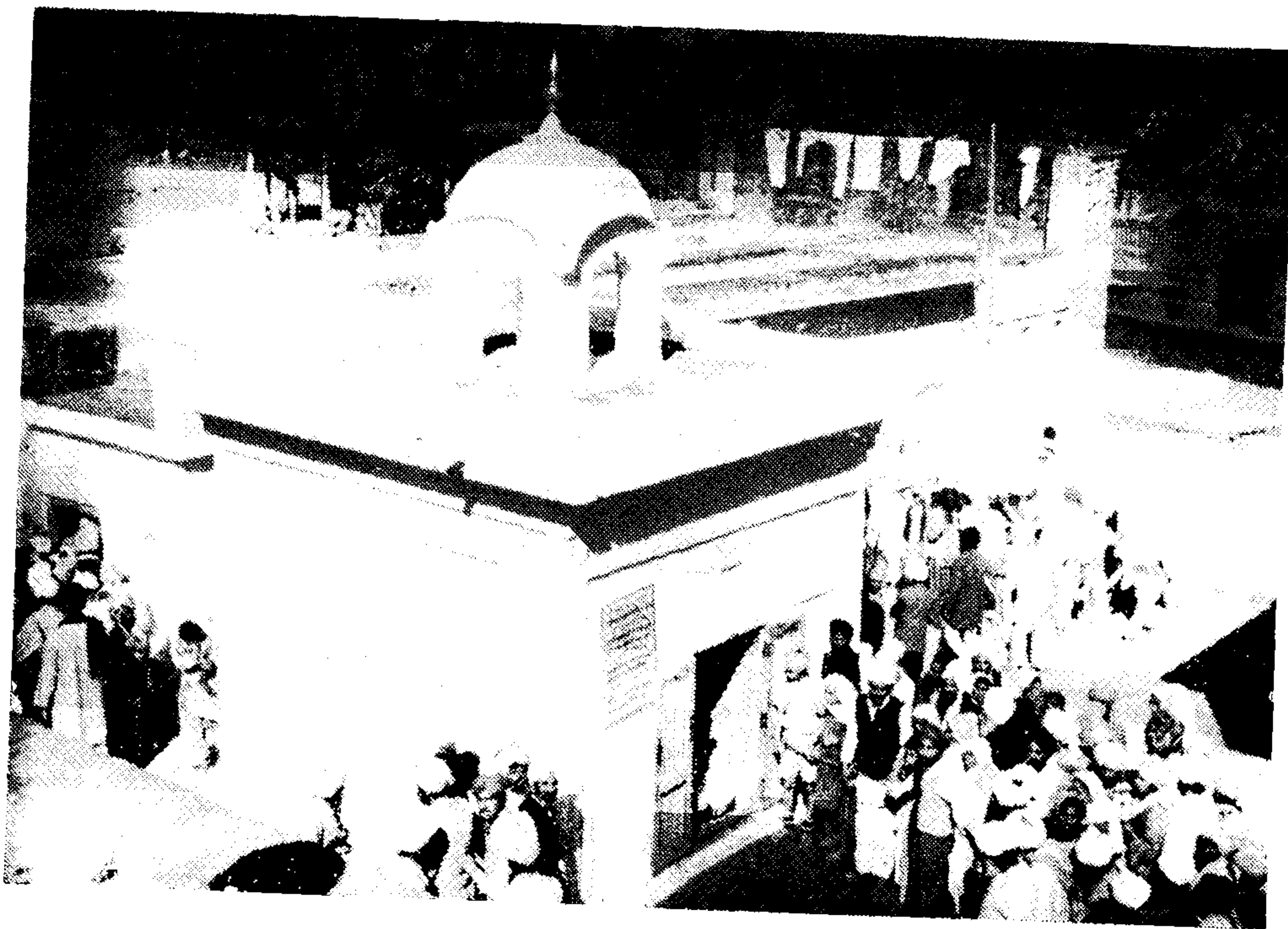
some of their holy places. But this period of dominance was short-lived and was followed by one of continued suffering and persecution. At the time of one of Ahmad Shah Abdali's campaigns of extermination against them, 20,000 Sikhs were killed in a single day's battle and, for the moment, he thought that he had finished up the whole race. He blew up❖ the building of the Harmandir at Amritsar and filled up the holy tank. But Sikhs' spirit remained unvanquished and they continued the fight. A constant aim was to be able to rebuild their demolished Gurdwaras and restore their sanctity



*Gurdwara Damdama Sahib. Here
Guru Gobind Singh was proclaimed
Guru after Guru Teg Bahadur's
martyrdom in Delhi.*

and to this task they addressed themselves at great peril at the most critical moments of their struggle. In 1753, they gathered in large numbers at Anandpur for the spring festival of *Hola Mohalla*, when they were attacked by the governor of Jullundur, Adeena Beg, and dispersed with a very heavy loss of life. Within six months of Abdali's desecration of Amritsar, Sikhs returned to celebrate the Diwali, while the Shah was still in Lahore. The latter was defeated in an action on the eve of the festival. After celebrating the day, the Sikhs retired to their jungle haunts in the Malwa.

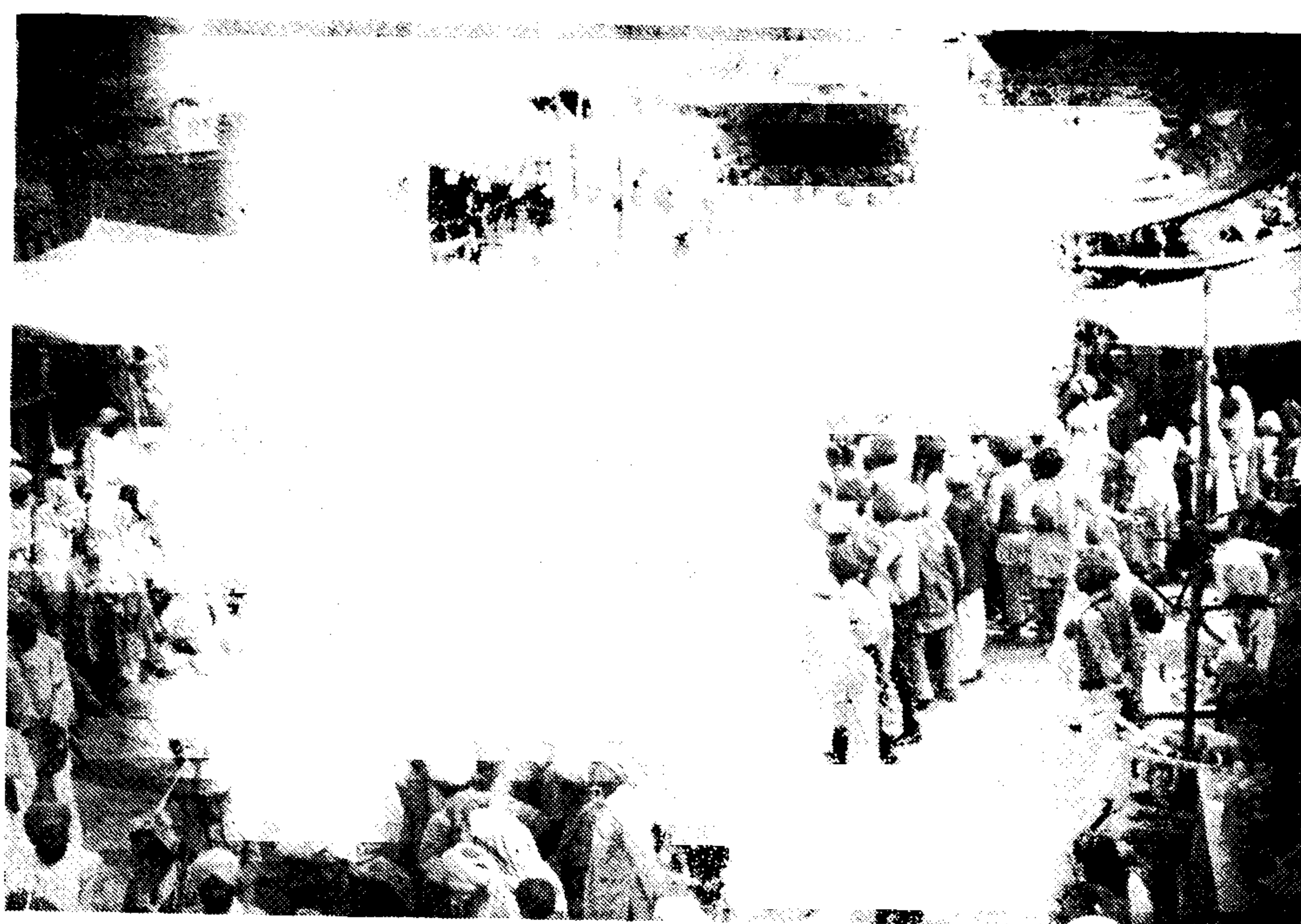
❖ It is said that as the masonry was being blown up, a flying stone hit Ahmad Shah Abdali on the nose, causing a wound which ultimately killed him.



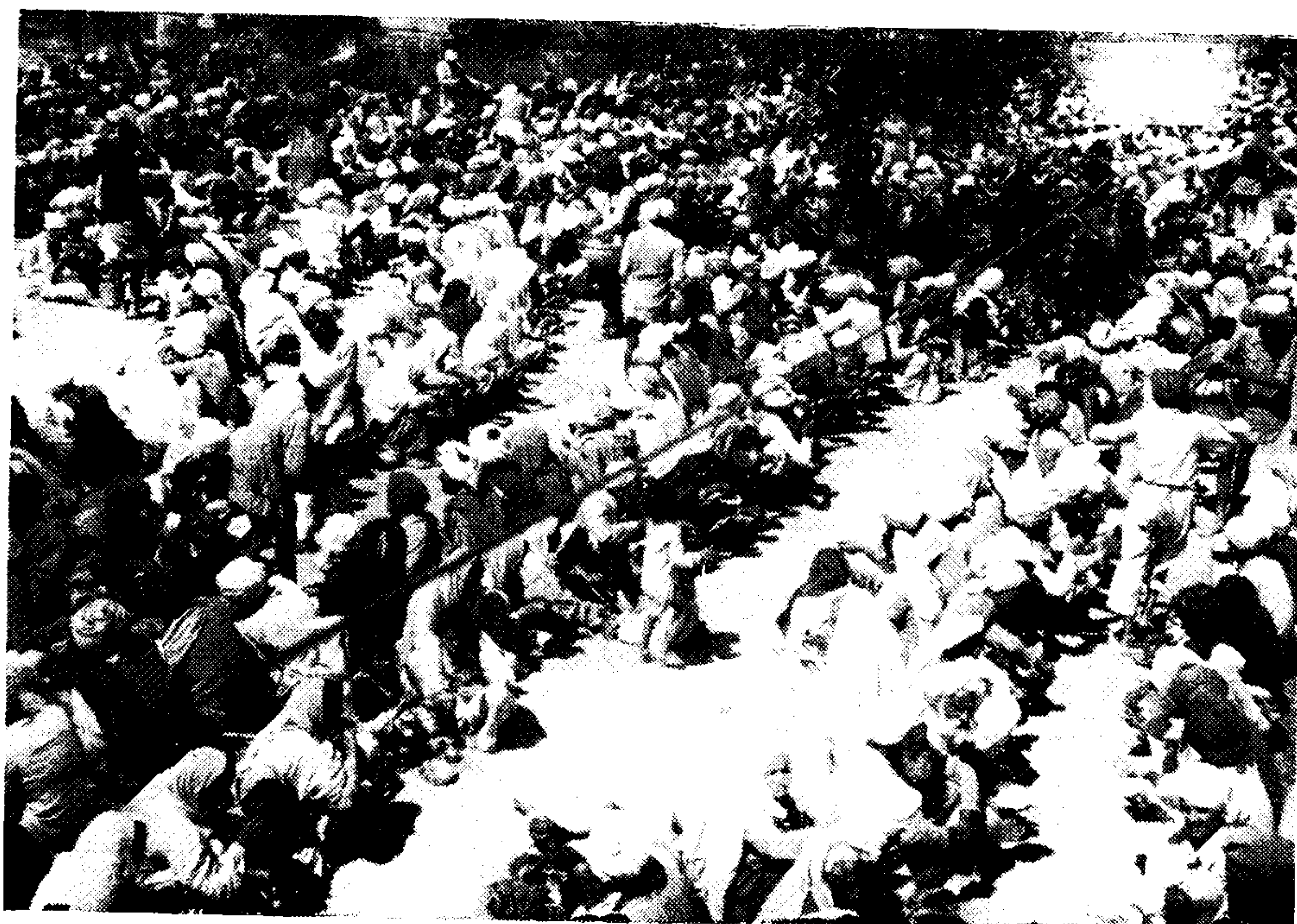
Gurdwara Bhora Sahib, where the afflicted and aggrieved Pandits from Kashmir besought the help of Guru Teg Bahadur against fanaticism of Aurangzeb.



Gurdwara Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind Sahib, which is situated at Kiratpur Sahib.

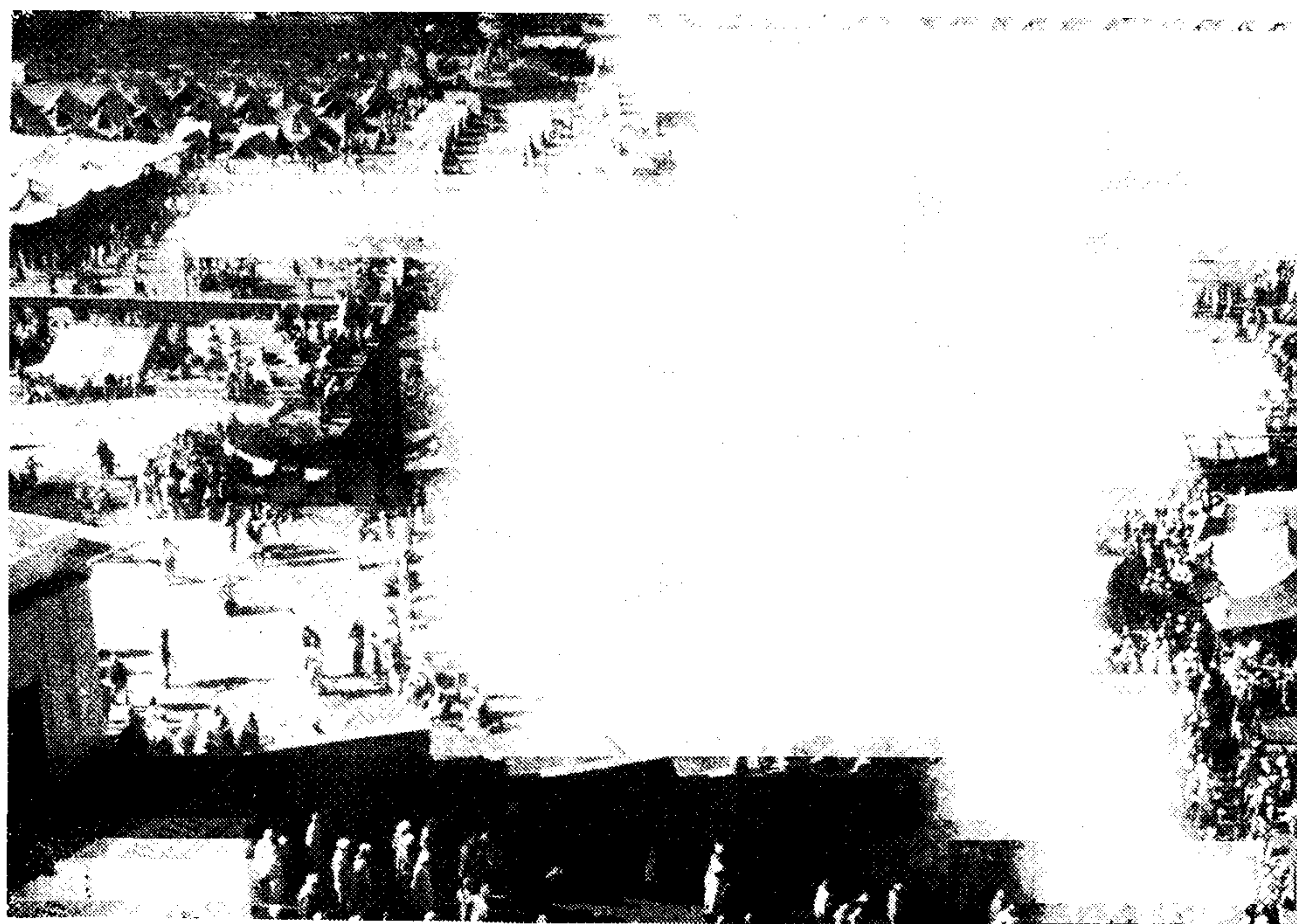


A view of the procession at the
Hola Mohalla Festival.



Guru Ka Langar
Guru's Free Kitchen, an important institution
with the Sikhs.

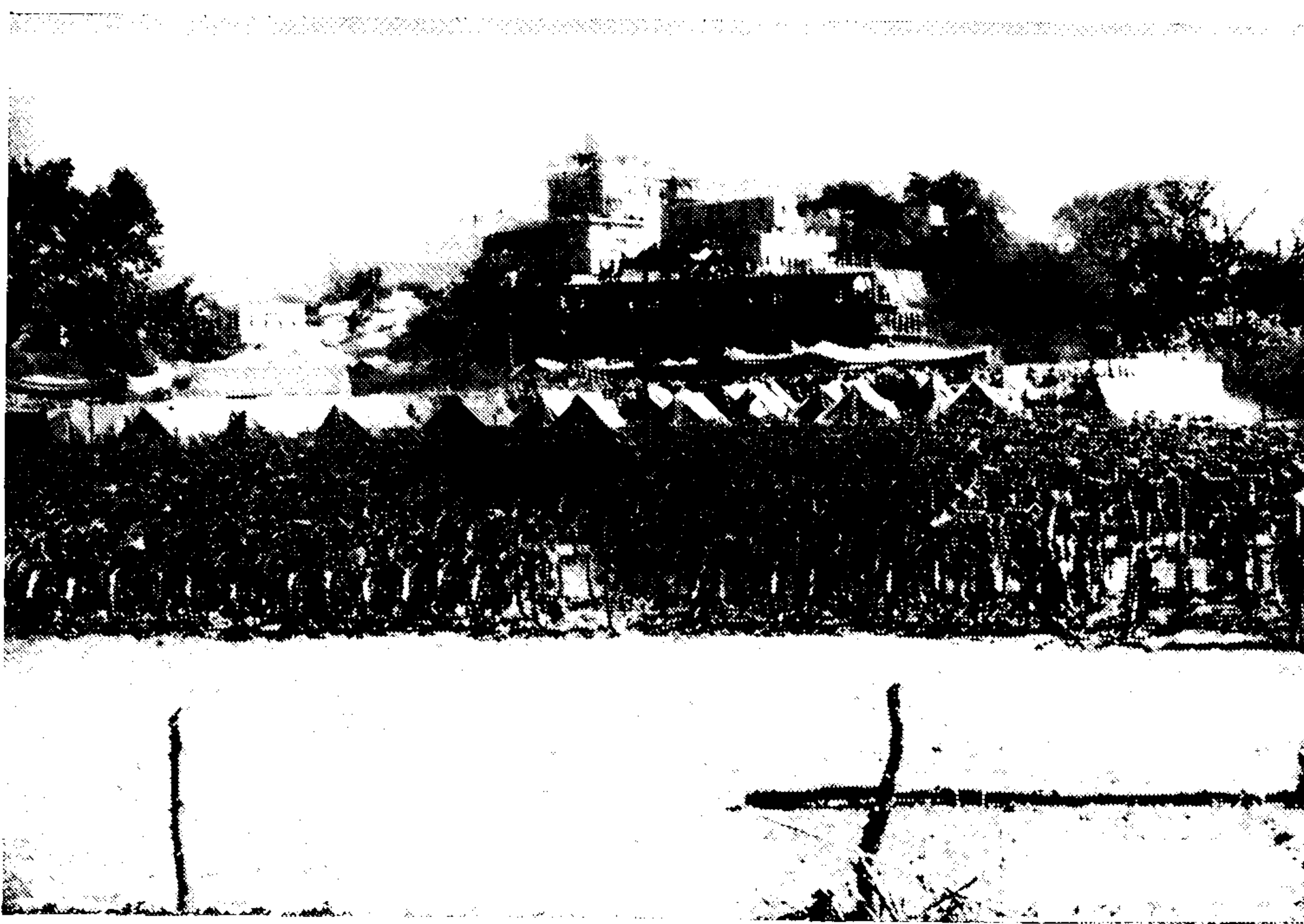
As soon as the Sikhs were more firmly established as a political power in the Panjab, they set about repairing and re-building their holy places which had been desecrated or destroyed. Langars were



An other view of the Festival.

restarted and Sikh chiefs and rulers donated lands to various Gurdwaras for their maintenance. Anandpur regained its position of pre-eminence as the birth-place of the Khalsa. In the twenties of the present century the shrine passed into the management of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, a representative organization of the Panth, which was brought into being by the Government as a result of a prolonged struggle on the part of the Sikhs to secure control of their holy places from the priests, who, in most cases, had usurped Gurdwara properties and fallen from the path of religious duty.

Anandpur, today, is a small town; but once in a year it acquires a busy aspect and it recaptures its old glory and splendour. The occasion is Hola Mohalla in the month of March. Thousands of Sikhs fgather from long distances to take part in the celebrations. Ceremonies of baptism, as enjoined by Guru Gobind Singh, are held, religious discourses given and community affairs discussed by the leaders. The place assumes for the time being its old role as the centre of Panthic activity. The climax comes on the last day when a huge



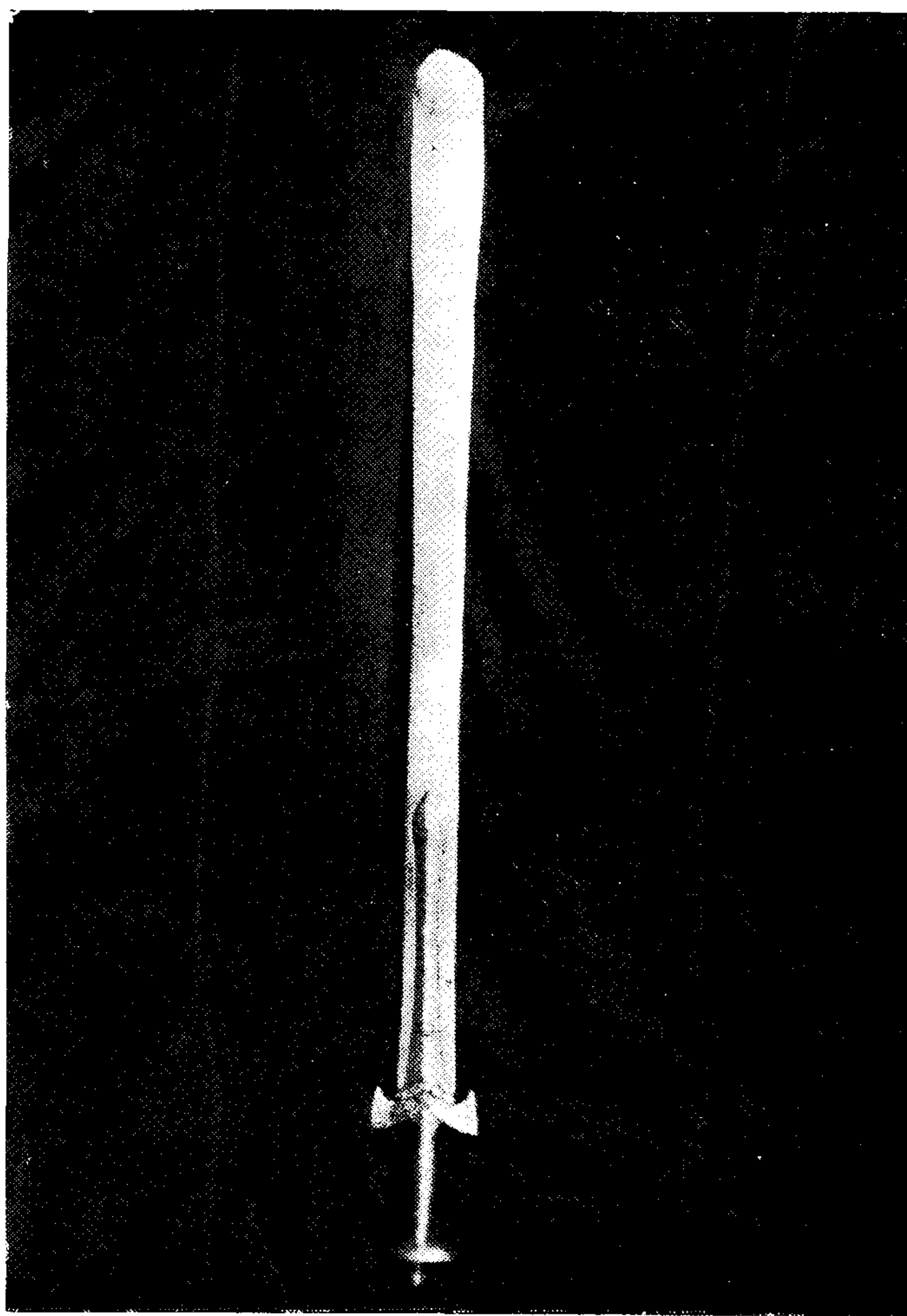
A view of Gurdwara Keshgarh Sahib on the occasion of Hola Mohalla Festival. In the foreground are the bicycles of visiting pilgrims.

procession, called Mohalla, is taken out. Great is the ardour and enthusiasm of the participants who chant the sacred hymns and display feats of soldiering and horse-man-ship as they march along. Scenes of the days of the Lord of Anandpur are recalled.

In Gurdwara Keshgarh at Anandpur are preserved six arms connected with important events in Sikh history or the life of Guru Gobind Singh. The most important of these is the steel *Khanda*—a double-edged broad sword—which was used by Guru Gobind Singh, when he prepared Amrit, or the baptismal water, at the time of the inauguration of the Khalsa in 1699. The fresh waters of the Sutlej mixed with sugar crystals in an iron vessel, were stirred with this *Khanda* to prepare Amrit which gave new life and spirit to the nation. The second one is a *Katar*, or a short sword. Guru Gobind Singh wore this weapon on his person and used it on many an occasion for fighting hand to hand in battle or in sport to kill tigers and leopards. *Karpa Barchha* is a broad spear with a blade fashioned in the style of the palm of the human hand. History records two occasions when it was used. First it was used by the youthful Guru Gobind Singh on the occasion of his wedding at a place, about six miles to the North of Anandpur Sahib, known as 'Guru Ka Lahore'. The Guru chose this beautiful spot, rich in natural hill scenery, for the celebrations, since he did not like it to travel all the way to Lahore, the provincial capital of the Mughals.

It was reported to him that there was scarcity of fresh drinking water for the people who had assembled to attend the Guru's wedding. The Guru, who was in the prime of his youth, came riding and pierced a rock thrice with this spear. Three streams of water gushed forth. They have been flowing ever since with their sweet and sparkling waters, adding to the picturesque charm of the surroundings.

This spear was used again during the famous siege of Anandpur Sahib. The siege had lasted for a long time and there were no signs of the Sikhs surrendering. Kesri Chand, one of the besieging chiefs proudly said that he would bring Guru Gobind Singh dead or alive, by the next sunset, or not show his face to his comrades again. This was communicated to the Guru, who named his chief of the army, Bhai Ude Singh, to try his strength with the Mughal general. Bhai Ude Singh, armed with weapons of offence and defence, including this spear, went out of the fort and challenged Raja Kesri Chand to fight a duel with him. The challenge was accepted and, in the fight that followed, Kesri Chand was vanquished and killed and his severed head, pierced with this spear, was brought to the Guru's camp where it was laid to rest with becoming honours.



Nagni Barchha is another spear. Its blade is cast in the form of a snake. In the battle of Anandpur it was used by

The Khanda or double-edged sword which Guru Gobind Singh used in preparing Amrit at the time of the inauguration of the Khalsa in 1699 A.D.



Guru-Ka-Lahore

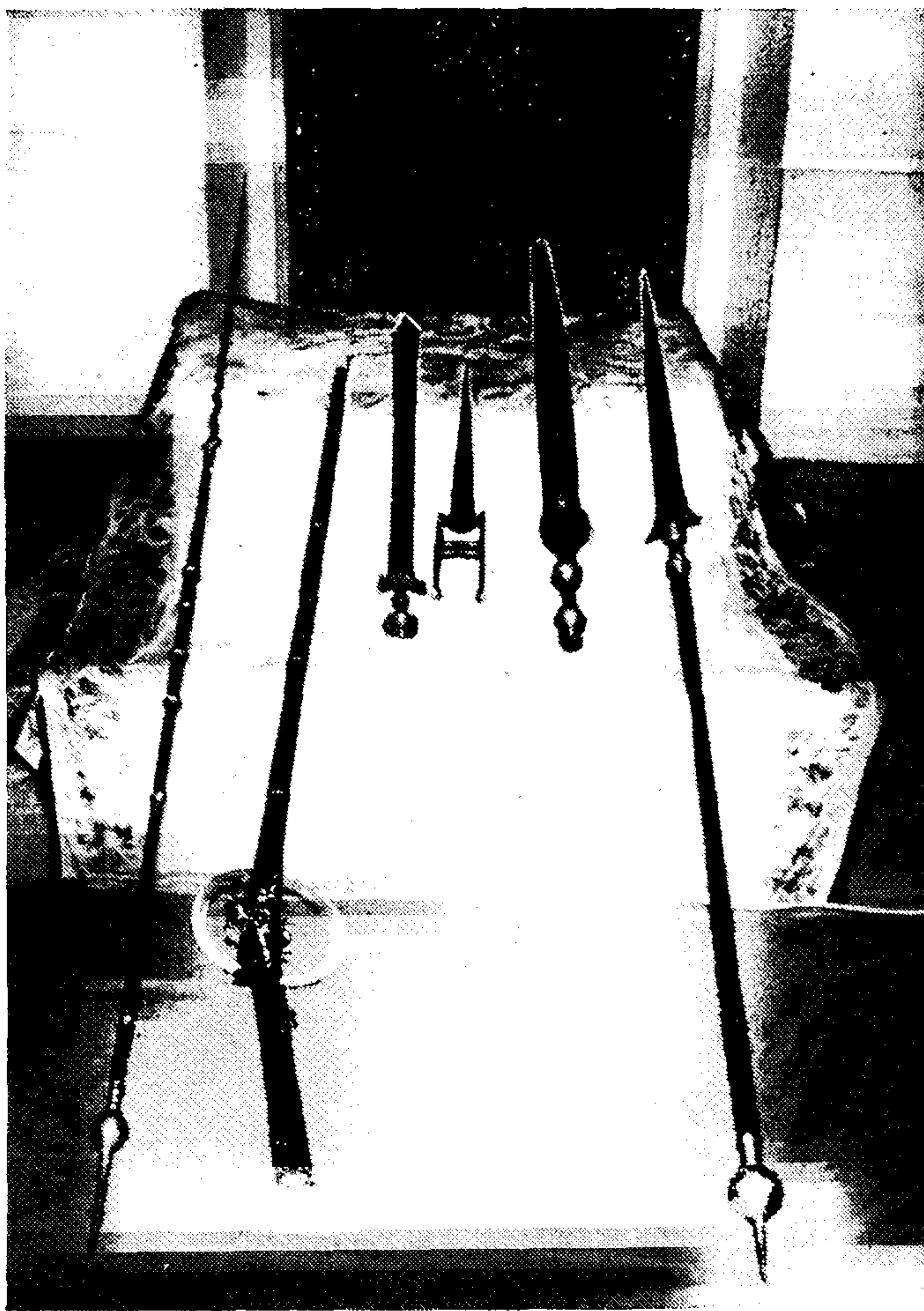
Here was celebrated the wedding ceremony of
Guru Gobind Singh.



A grand view of the fascinating valley Surrounding
Guru-ka-Lahore.

Bhai Bachittar Singh, a reputed Sikh warrior and a younger brother of Bhai Ude Singh.

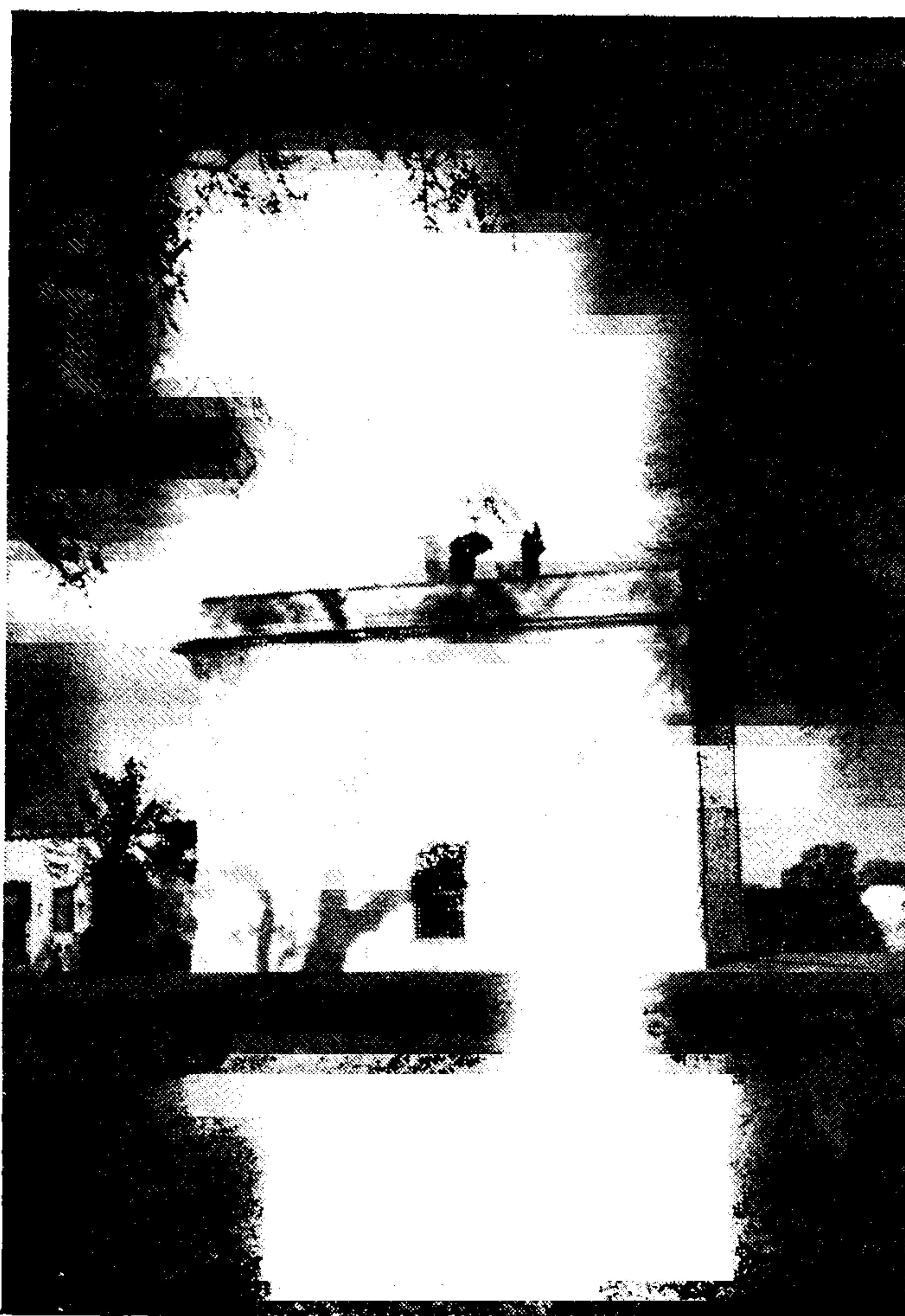
To break open the gates of the Guru's fort, the enemy brought a mighty, drunken elephant. Seven plates of steel, one upon the other, covered the forehead of the animal, which was followed by a large number of soldiers. Bhai Bachittar Singh was commissioned by the Guru to fight the elephant. The great warrior went forth armed with *Nagni Barchha* and a sharp steel sword. Riding his horse and standing in the stirrups, he pierced with the spear the seven steel plates and wounded the elephant in forehead. With lightning alacrity he attacked



Six historical arms preserved in Gurdwara Keshgarh Sahib.

again and cut the elephant's trunk with a blow of his sword. The wounded beast ran back in fury trampling under foot those who were following him. The *Nagni Barchha* keeps fresh the memory of this brave deed of Bhai Bachittar Singh.

Guru Gobind Singh's musket is another precious relic preserved at Anandpur Sahib. After the battle of Muktsar, the Guru reached Sabo-ki-Talwandi, now Damdama Sahib, where Chaudhry Dalla, a local chief who professed the Sikh faith, met him. The Chaudhry told the Guru that if he had sent him word, his (Chaudhry's) brave followers would have fought on his side and changed the course of events. One day a Sikh craftsman from Lahore brought as an offering a musket he had made. The Guru,



*Last resting place of Guru
Gobind Singh's wife, Mata Jito ji.*

who always prized the gift of a weapon, asked Dalla to bring a couple of his followers to become targets for him to judge the range of his new musket. The Chaudhry went to his camp, but failed to persuade anyone of his followers to come forward to comply with the Guru's wish. At last, Dalla reported to the Guru that his men were willing to die for him in battle, but not as targets in front of his musket. The Guru then sent word to his own camp. Two Sikhs Bir Singh and Randhir Singh, father and son, came running to offer themselves as targets for the Guru's musket. The Guru asked them to stand one behind the other

and aimed the musket at them. Each of them stood on his toes to be higher than the other to be the first one to receive the bullet. The Guru fired above their heads and afterwards embraced and blessed his devoted Sikhs. The idea was to prove to Dalla, who had talked proudly of his soldiers, that the Guru's Sikhs were not inferior to anyone in courage.

The Saif is a double-edged broad sword of the Arab origin. It is nearly 1300 years old and was used by the Caliphs of Islam in, at least, five battles. It bears Arabic inscriptions and was Aurangzeb's property once upon a time. The sword was presented to Guru Gobind Singh by Emperor Bahadur Shah, the eldest son and successor of Aurangzeb.



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